Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources

Hon. Colin Maxwell
Minister

Parks Branch

Crooked Lake Provincial Park

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CROOKED LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK

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by: Hilding O. Franson, B.A., M.Sc., MCIP,
Recreation Consultant
Regina, Saskatchewan

CONTENTS

		Page
1.	SUMMARY	2
2.	BACKGROUND	
	2.1 - Previous Plans and Development	3
	2.2 - Park Classification and Purpose	3
	2.3 - Regional Context	
	2.3.1 - Location/Access	4
	2.3.2 - Regional Perspective [Figure 1]	5
	2.3.3 - Size of Park	5
3.	RESOURCE INFORMATION	
	3.1 - Historical Review	6
	3.2 - Natural Features	
	3.2.1 - Geology	7
	3.2.2 - Physiography	8
	3.2.3 - Climate	9
	3.2.4 - Soils	9
	3.2.5 - Vegetation	10
	3.2.6 - Aquatic	11
	3.2.7 - Wildlife	11
	3.2.8 - Archaeology	12
	3.3 - Recreational Features	
	3.3.1 - Units of the Park	12
	3.3.2 - Park Boundaries and Units of the Park [Figure 2]	14
	3.4 - Recreational Use	
	3.4.1 - Existing Use	14
	.1.1 - Available Facilities	15
	.1.2 - Recreation Use and Trends	16
	.1.3 - Resource Use and Trends	17
	3.4.2 - Potential Benefits and Use	
	.2.1 - Resource Protection and Interpretation	18
	.2.2 - Outdoor Recreation Benefits	18
	.2.3 - Tourism Benefits	18
4.	FUTURE REQUIREMENTS	19
	Selected References	

1. SUMMARY

Crooked Lake Provincial Park was established in 1986 through the reclassification of the existing Recreation Site on the north east shore of Crooked Lake in the eastern reaches of the Qu'Appelle Valley. The Park will serve the local residents primarily as a day-use area as well as complement the system of recreational facilities established along the Qu'Appelle Valley Recreation Corridor. The Park provides the only major area of public parkland in the lower Qu'Appelle region and on Crooked Lake itself. It offers a variety of quality outdoor recreational opportunities for activities such as walking/hiking, nature study, camping, boating, fishing, canoeing, swimming/sun bathing, scenic appreciation and picnicking.

This document summarizes the resource values and recreational features of the area, existing and potential recreational uses, and suggests future public and/or private development opportunities within the Park.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Previous Plans and Developments

The Crooked Lake Recreation Site was established on the north shore, near the east end of Crooked Lake in 1965. The shoreline area was originally used for private summer cottages; however the cottages were relocated to the Greenspot Cottage Subdivision, to the southeast, and the area developed for public use and access to the lake. The original objective in purchasing the land and relocating the cottages was to establish a Provincial Park, as had been recommended by an independent consultant report (W.M. Baker; 1958). A preliminary plan of development was prepared in 1965 by the Department of Natural Resources Park Planning Branch and internal roads, boat launch area and parking lots were subsequently constructed.

In the latter 1960's and 1970's all further major development was held in abeyance pending the development of the Indian sponsored Last Oak Park on the south side of Round and Crooked Lakes. Rather than be developed as a Provincial Park in competition to the Indian park venture, the Crooked Lake site was relegated to Recreation Site status. The Last Oak Park has not been fully developed as originally anticipated by the four neighbouring Indian Bands. Separate recreation facilities such as the Ochapowace ski resort, the Cowessess Golf and Country Club and the Sakimay cottage subdivision continue to operate. The elaborate plans for Last Oak Park have not materialized due to a combination of circumstances.

The Crooked Lake Provincial Park, now reclassified and to be developed as a Provincial Recreation Park, will provide much needed improvement to the public outdoor recreational opportunities in the area and is expected to complement opportunities on Indian lands, by attracting additional users to the area, rather than detracting from them.

2.2 Park Classification and Purpose

Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources presented a White Paper on the Parks Act in 1984. A network of 17 Provincial Parks and over three hundred Recreation Sites, Regional Parks and Protected Areas had been established since the 1930's. It was anticipated that the existing system of park lands could become better known, appreciated and used.

It was also clear that the establishment of additional Provincial Parks was needed to fully represent the natural and cultural diversity of the province and to provide a greater range of recreational opportunities in all seasons of the year to all residents and visitors.

One of the major provisions of the Parks Act is to identify a classification of Provincial Parks for the purpose of creating a greater public awareness of the primary purpose of individual parks and therefore a more appropriate understanding and use of the area; and a more clear and comprehensive approach to park planning, development and use.

Four classes of Provincial Parks are now identified: Wilderness Parks; Natural Environment Parks; Recreation Parks and Historic Parks. Provincial Parks are usually large areas of land and water where the high quality of the natural resources combine to make the area provincially significant. The Parks are dedicated to the people of Saskatchewan and visitors to the province for their enjoyment and the cultural, educational and social benefits that may be derived from them for present and future generations. All Parks are established to achieve the dual purpose of recreational use and resource protection, while contributing to the provincial economy through tourism.

As a Recreation Park, Crooked Lake will be developed and used in a manner distinctly different from the other three classes of Provincial Parks. The criteria used to differentiate this class of park from the others include: primary purpose, objectives, recreational activities, accessibility, visitor facilities and services, commercial activity and resource management strategies.

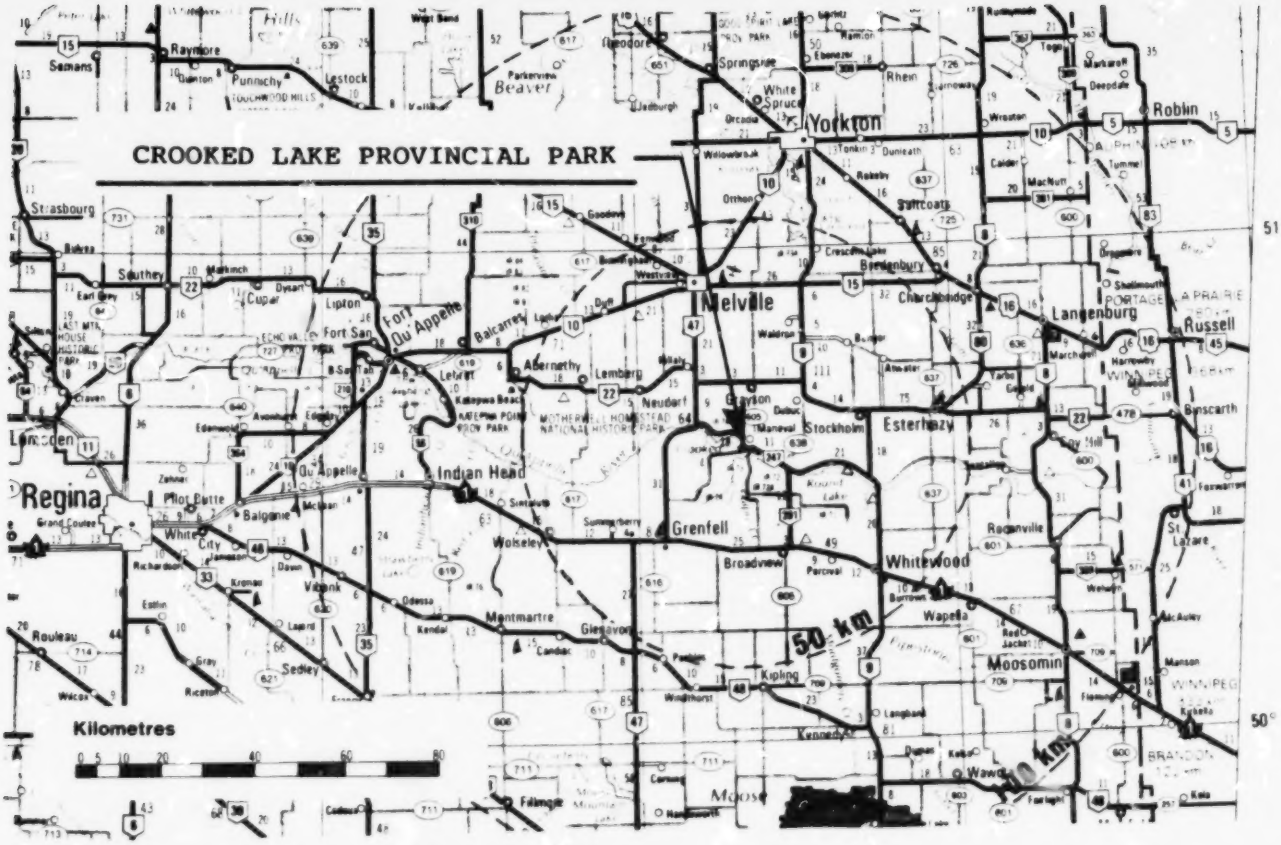
The primary purpose of Crooked Lake Provincial Park will be to provide high quality recreational opportunities in the region. The focus will be on development of facilities to support a wide range of recreational activities in an attractive natural setting. Unlike a Recreation Site, which is typically a small area focused on a particular activity or facility like a beach, the Crooked Lake Recreation Park will utilize most of its area and variety of resources to encourage the widest possible segment of the public to come to the Park and to experience and enjoy the out-of-doors.

2.3 Regional Context

2.3.1 Location/Access

Crooked Lake is located in the eastern reaches of the Qu'Appelle Valley River Basin about 45 km south of Melville and 40 km north-east of Grenfell. The Provincial Park can be reached by following Highway #47 south from Melville or north from Grenfell and turning east onto Highway #247 in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Alternative routes from further east are via Highway #9 south from Stockholm or north from Whitewood to #247 or north from Broadview on route #201. Access to Crooked Lake Provincial Park is very good from the Trans-Canada Highway, approximately 20 km south of the Qu'Appelle Valley. Tourists may be attracted from the Trans-Canada Highway to enjoy the sight-seeing and Park facilities along this short alternate loop.

2.3.2 Regional Perspective



2.3.3 Size of Park

Crooked Lake Provincial Park is comprised of portions of five adjacent quarter sections on the northeast shore of Crooked Lake, all in Township 19, Range 5, West of the Second Meridian. Specifically the Park includes legal subdivisions 12 and 13 in Section 4, the northern half of Section 5 and legal subdivisions 3, 4, 5, 6, 11 and 12 in Section 8, excepting portions taken for the Greenspot Subdivision and provincial roadways and portions of the quarters covered by the waters of Crooked Lake.

The total area of the Provincial Park is 190.4 ha (470.46 acres). Figure 2 illustrates the size and shape of the Park.

Most public use of the former Recreation Site was limited to the gently sloping lake frontage south of Highway 247. This major valley highway bisects the lower lakefront lands from the steep valley walls, coulees and upland further north and east. Much of this upland is presently leased for agricultural purposes.

3. RESOURCE INFORMATION

3.1 Historical Review

Recreational development in the Crooked Lake/Round Lake reach of the Qu'Appelle Valley goes back many decades, primarily associated with private cottage subdivisions adjacent to bathing beaches at the most suitable locations on the shorelines. These include 'resorts' still in existence at Bird's Point, Grimean Park and West End on the north shore of Round Lake, as well as Melville Beach, Moose Bay, Sunset Beach and Greenspot on the north shore of Crooked Lake. In addition, a large cottage subdivision, Grenfell Beach, has been developed on the south side of Crooked Lake on the Sakimay Indian Reserve.

Recreational facilities or services associated with these private cottage resorts often included a dance hall, some rental cabins, camping and picnic areas. Of prime importance to the entrepreneur and the local cottage population was the local store/confectionary, gas pumps, boat rentals and other seasonal services.

The Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources engaged a consultant in 1958 to investigate and evaluate the existing and potential outdoor recreation areas in southern Saskatchewan (W.M. Baker, Nov., 1958). This report recommended the acquistion of a number of areas with natural outdoor recreation potential. Many of these areas were subsequently acquired in the early 1960's and plans were made for their development as Provincial Parks. A number of the current Provincial Parks originated at that time including Echo Valley, Buffalo Pound, Rowan's Ravine, Pike Lake, and The Battlefords. The property at Crooked Lake was acquired at that time as well.

Baker followed up the 1958 Report on Outdoor Recreation in Southern Saskatchewan with a further study for the Department of Natural Resources (1966) "Tourist and Outdoor Recreation Patterns and Prospects in the Qu'Appelle Valley and on Last Mountain Lake". It was during this period that the four Indian Bands with land on the south side of the Qu'Appelle Valley between Round and Crooked Lakes began to seriously consider development of recreation potential on their lands. The "Last Oak Park" proposal was developed, consisting of a series of individual sites on the four reserves. Day use areas, campgrounds, cottage subdivisions, a golf course, ski resort, accommodation and other commercial ventures were planned. Economic viability has proven to be difficult, even for the most successful elements such as the golf course and the ski resort. Considerable federal and provincial government capital investment was made in support of the Indian recreational venture, but the long term goals have not been met.

Development of The Crooked Lake Recreation Site was consciously curtailed in the 1970's in favour of provincial support

for the Last Oak Park. The four Indian Bands involved have subsequently agreed to dispense with the Last Oak Park Corporation in favour of more local reserve autonomy and independent band management of developed facilities such as the ski resort (Ochapowace), the golf course (Cowessess), and the Grenfell Beach cottage subdivision (Sakimay). None of the Bands have developed public outdoor recreation facilities on their reserves and future plans remain uncertain.

By the mid 1980's it was apparent that a public recreation need existed which could best be served, as originally intended, at the Crooked Lake Provincial Park.

3.2 NATURAL FEATURES

3.2.1 Geology

The character of landforms and surface materials in the Crooked Lake area has evolved over thousands of years. The nature of these landforms and materials plays a significant role in providing opportunities and constraints for recreational development. The landscape has evolved through numerous long-term and ongoing geological processes of erosion, transportation and deposition of materials.

Millions of years ago a warm shallow sea inundated what is now southern Saskatchewan. Thick layers of mineral and organic sediments were deposited at the bottom of this sea. These Cretaceous sediments formed what is now the bedrock material underlying the area.

Over a period of millions of years with the formation of the Rocky Mountains to the west, and subsequent glaciation of much of the North American Continent, the landscape took on new features. The bedrock near Crooked Lake was covered by a thick blanket of material, in places up to 600 feet deep.

The surface character of the Qu'Appelle Valley is mainly the result of the Wisconsinan deglaciation, the last of four Pleistocene glacial events. This last glacial retreat occurred approximately 10,000 years ago in this area. Different phases of this most recent deglaciation have been identified, helping to explain much of the landscape character seen today in the Crooked Lake area.

The Qu'Appelle Valley was carved by meltwater from this last retreating ice sheet. The flow of water was so great that the valley channel was cut nearly 600 feet deep, completely through the accumulated tills of all previous glaciers and, in places, into the buried bedrock.

Since the retreat of the last glacier, erosion by wind and water has worked to level and modify the landscape around this 'glacial spillway'. The valley has been partially filled, hills

have been worn down and the flow of water in the valley, the Qu'Appelle River, is now a mere trickle by comparison to the original volumes.

The Qu'Appelle Valley bottom is slowly being filled by sediments. A number of valley bottom environments are evident including alluvial fans, lakes, beaches, flood plains, deltas and the river itself. As a result of local base levels created by alluvial fans and lakes, the Qu'Appelle River has slowly taken on the character of an "old age" river where horizontal erosion predominated over vertical erosion. Features such as meanders, oxbows, cutoffs and meander scars are very common on the floor of the valley.

[Readers are encouraged to read the "Fort-Qu'Appelle Geolog" to become more fully conversant with the formation and physical environment of the Qu'Appelle Valley. This interpretive report is available from the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina.]

3.2.2 Physiography

The Qu'Appelle Valley landscape is always changing, although it might not be obvious during the course of one's lifetime. Looking at the broad, deep valley one might conclude that this feature was so grand that it always has been there, and always will be.

The Qu'Appelle Valley is approximately 350 feet deep and a mile wide in the vicinity of Crooked Lake. The lake lies at an altitude of 1,482 feet above sea level while the gently rolling upland immediately north and east is at an elevation of approximately 1,825 feet.

The dominant physical feature in this part of the valley is Crooked Lake. With a surface area of approximately 3,700 acres and a mean depth of 26 feet, it is one of the smaller lakes in the Qu'Appelle Basin.

The Park area itself is a combination of valley bottom, steep valley slopes and upland plains. The valley bottom, sloping gently southward from the toe of the steeper valley sides to the lake, is approximately one-eighth of a mile wide and a mile long. Highway 247 parallels the north-east shore of Crooked Lake at the toe of the steep valley sides. Nearly one mile of shoreline is within the Park, however there are no well developed natural sand beaches such as can be found elsewhere on the lake.

The configuration of the upland and the erosional features of the valley walls combine to produce some excellent scenic viewpoints overlooking the Qu'Appelle Valley and Crooked Lake.

The geological history, in combination with the physiographic features creates an overall effect of scenic attractiveness and an outdoor recreational attitude for the visitor. The boundaries of the Provincial Recreation Park include typical representative segments of the landscape from the lakeshore to the aspen grove parkland overlooking the valley.

3.2.3 Climate

The Qu'Appelle basin lies in a mid-latitude steppe climatic zone characterized by hot summers, cold winters, moderate precipitation and variable weather patterns. Climatic data recorded at Broadview, 30 km. south east, illustrates these patterns.

The temperature range is from a maximum of 38 degrees C (mean maximum is 24 degrees C) in July to a minimum of -46 degrees C (mean minimum is -23 degrees C) in January.

The majority of the 453.6 mm of annual precipitation falls as rain (338.6 mm) with June recording the most rainfall at 100 mm. Most snow falls in November and March, averaging 116.7 cm annually.

The prevailing winds are from the northwest during the winter and from the northwest and southeast in summer. The greatest velocities occur during the winter months. Within the Qu'Appelle Valley proper, wind directions are generally modified and redirected by coulees and changes in the valley orientation. Generally the valley's south facing slopes are buffered from the effects of the northwest winds. The north shoreline of Crooked Lake however is much exposed to the prevailing southeast winds year-round.

The south-facing slopes of the valley and tributary ravines or coulees are more directly exposed to the sun's rays, especially in winter when the hours of sunlight are short and the altitude low. This factor effectively makes these slopes much drier, limiting the growth of vegetation. North-facing areas which are often shaded from the sun are the most heavily vegetated.

3.2.4 Soils

The soils in the Crooked Lake Park reflect their geologic origins and topographic situation. Within the Park three distinct types are apparent. The lower valley sides and coalesced alluvial fans characteristically form long, smooth gentle slopes along the toe of the valley sides but above the essentially flat valley floor or lake. They are composed mainly of silt and sand with surficial and buried organic horizons. These soil sediments are generally loose and susceptible to run-off and wave erosion when vegetation has been disturbed. These soils are fertile, and suitable for irrigation and intensive use if properly managed.

The eroded valley sides are composed mainly of glacial till and stratified drift. Lacustrine silts, clays, sands and gravels may be present but the continuous erosional action of wind and water has tended to limit the development of any significant organic soil horizons especially in exposed areas. In more localized sheltered sites where parkland vegetation has encroached upon the native mixed grasses, the organic soils have developed more extensively over the years. These soils are much more susceptible to erosion and destruction especially if the overlying protective vegetation is removed or damaged.

On the upland areas, outside the eroded valley walls, the most extensive landform type is ground moraine or undifferentiated glacial till. Here the soils are classified as belonging to the Black "Oxbow" association with a dominant medium loam texture. The Black Soil Zone is coincident with the Aspen Grove Parkland Ecological Region. These soils are typical grassland soils despite the development of aspen groves in more recent history. These soils are capable of extensive use for outdoor recreation activities.

3.2.5 Vegetation

The vegetation in this portion of the Qu'Appelle Valley closely resembles that of the Aspen Grove Parkland Region. A marked contrast exists in the type and extent of vegetation cover between south-facing and north-facing slopes. In the Park area on the north side of the Lake grasslands and shrubs dominate the south-facing valley walls. Trees and heavy shrub growth are largely confined to coulees and depressions. Shrubs include snowberry, saskatoon and chokecherry with clumps of aspen poplar and rose in the more sheltered coulees. Bur oak, which are rare in Saskatchewan, can be found within the Park area. They are more common in the Qu'Appelle Valley further eastward, especially near the Assiniboine Valley.

On the valley flood plain, on the north shoreline of Crooked Lake native communities of Manitoba Maple, elm and ash are common, as well as aspen poplar, balsam poplar and, occasionally white birch. Willows, elderberry, high bush cranberry and red osier dogwood can also be found adjacent to the water.

The upland portion of the Park is typical parkland with scattered aspen groves and occasional remnants of native grasses such as spear grass, june grass, western wheat grass and blue grama grass. Most of the original grass communities have been disturbed through occupancy, grazing and cultivation but careful management could see such native vegetation returned.

The natural vegetation within the former Recreation Site was supplemented by an extensive tree planting program in the mid-1960's. The open grasslands on the flood plain had been cultivated and farmed. Large clumps of trees and shrubs were

planted in these open areas to provide picnicking and sheltered sites. These plantations have matured sufficiently to give a park-like environment to the Park.

3.2.6 Aquatic

There are 34 species of fish reported in the Qu'Appelle River system: 19 of these are native to the Qu'Appelle and the remainder have either entered through migration via the Assiniboine River downstream, or have been introduced through diversion from Lake Diefenbaker. Of the larger species of fish, the sport fish most sought by anglers are the northern pike, walleye and yellow perch. Rock bass and whitefish are also found but perch is the most abundant species.

Crooked Lake has been classified as being of average productivity in relation to other Qu'Appelle Valley Lakes, as indicated by the standing crop of plankton in the lake. The three major sport fish species, pike, perch and walleye, spawn within the shallow areas of the lake. Pike and perch utilize the shallow marshy areas and weeded shorelines while the walleye spawn upon the shallow gravelly areas of the shoreline.

The Provincial Park will provide and ensure a permanent public access point to Crooked Lake for sport fishing.

3.2.7 Wildlife

The Crooked Lake reach of the Qu'Appelle Valley contains a variety of wildlife populations associated with the vegetation communities found in the Valley. Species of special note in the upland areas include white-tailed deer and sharp-tailed grouse. Some of the largest numbers of white-tailed deer can be found to be wintering in the Qu'Appelle Valley east of Crooked and Round Lakes, especially at the mouths of major tributaries. Mule deer are also present in the region.

Other animals common to both the upland and valley areas include coyotes, red foxes, porcupines, rabbits, badgers, striped skunks, grey squirrels and many species of rodents. Beaver, mink and muskrat are found along the river and, more commonly on tributary streams.

The diversity of habitats in the eastern portion of the Qu'Appelle makes it excellent for birds. The most common upland bird species include hawks, crows, magpies, kingbirds, shrikes, meadowlarks, owls and sparrows. Sharp-tailed and ruffed grouse frequent areas with tree and shrub vegetation on the fringe of cultivated areas.

Several hundred species of birds occupy, use or regularly pass through the valley in the vicinity of the Park. These include a variety of ducks, geese, white pelicans, great blue herons, the

double-crested cormorant and the turkey vulture. A number of shoreland species can be seen along the shores of Crooked Lake and the Qu'Appelle River. Further east, golden eagles can be seen during the winter and bald eagles may be seen during their spring migration.

3.2.8 Archaeology

The Moose Bay Burial Mound is most noteworthy as an archaeological site in the Crooked Lake area. It is one of ten known sites in the area and consists of eight bundle burials, several of which were under a roof-like structure of poles within the mound. This site has been dated as 910 (+/-70 years) before Present. Further investigation of the site was recommended by archaeologists in 1975. In its present condition with little documented evidence or knowledge, the site is of limited scientific or recreational value. A marker along Highway 247 acknowledges the general location of the Burial Mound. [Additional information may be obtained from the Museum of Natural History, Regina. in the form of a booklet "The Moose Bay Burial Mound" (Hanna, 1976)].

It would appear that the clustering of known archaeological sites overlooking both Crooked and Round Lakes relate directly to past long term use of these lakes by humans. Fish, wildlife, shelter, water, fuel and other elements would have provided the necessary ingredients for long term occupancy and use. Unfortunately little detail is known about the living habits of these people. Additional research in the area may be warranted to enhance this aspect of the Park's interpretive program.

3.3 Recreational Features

3.3.1 Units of the Park

Area 1: Crooked Lake Shoreline

This area will provide increased opportunity for land based recreational activities such as picnicking and camping and serve the primary function for public recreation access to Crooked Lake and associated backshore lands. Boat launching, sport fishing and limited sun bathing/beach facilities are located within this area. Access roads, parking and other basic services will continue to be concentrated in this area to provide a higher level of recreational services to the regional population.

Improvements such as grass irrigation, tree planting and other landscaping elements, games and playground areas and facilities and services are possible. The existing mature maples and other trees offer pleasant, sheltered picnicking/camping environments.

Area 2: Valley Walls

The Qu'Appelle Valley walls are steep, sloping south and west towards Crooked Lake. These slopes are generally between 1550 and 1800 feet above sea level and are grass covered except in sheltered gullies, ravines and depressions where parkland bush and tree species predominate.

Where more gentle slopes and vegetative cover permits, recreational development in the form of campsites and trails are possible.

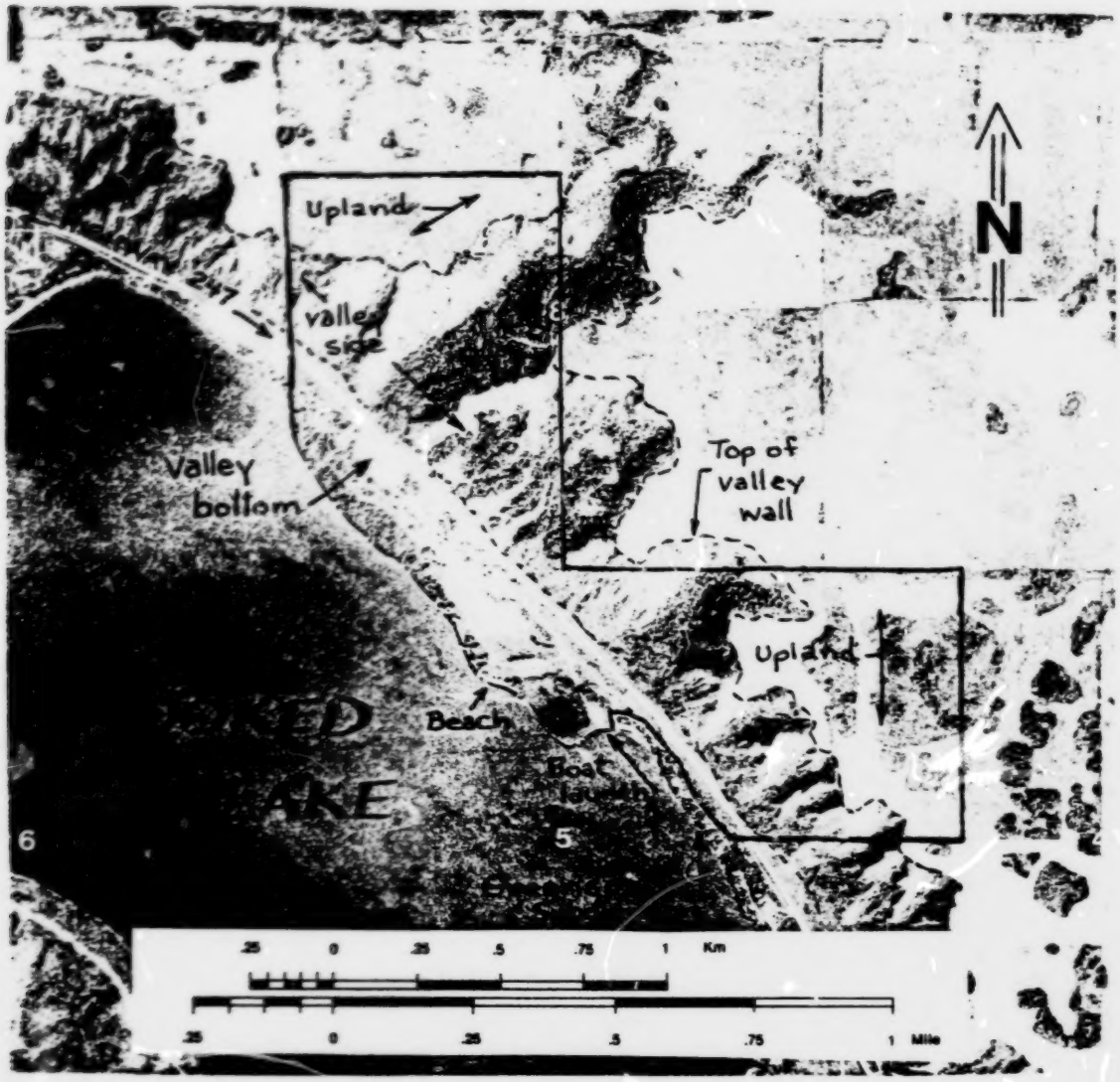
The more exposed steep slopes are too sensitive to permit any intensive recreation uses but provide an excellent natural backdrop for the Park. Motorized vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, skidoos, etc. must be prohibited in all such sensitive areas.

The larger coulees are most attractive in terms of their natural habitat for wildlife. Natural springs found in these coulees are used by wildlife year-round. These sheltered coulees offer the most attractive hiking, cross-country trails or walking access to scenic viewpoints along the ridge of the upland.

Area 3: Upland

The Park includes portions of two quarter sections which are primarily upland. These are the northwest quarter of section 8 and the northwest quarter of section 4. Much of this upland is currently leased and under agricultural cultivation. The southern part of the northwest quarter of section 8 is suited to extensive recreation uses such as hiking, camping, trail riding, scenic viewing or cross-country skiing since it directly overlooks Crooked Lake and the major treed coulee within the Park. It is near the Moose Bay Burial Mound, the most significant of a series of archaeological sites on the north side of Crooked Lake. The northwest quarter of Section 4 is typical of the Parkland vegetation with its scattered bluffs of aspen and shrubs. It also provides excellent viewing, hiking and riding opportunities along the rim of the scenic Qu'Appelle Valley, overlooking the Park center and Crooked Lake.

3.3.2 Park Boundaries and Units of the Park [Figure 2]



3.4 Recreational Use

3.4.1 Existing Use

Use of the former Crooked Lake Recreation Site increased significantly over the last five year period, as indicated by increased visitation and camper use (see tables 1 and 2). The peak time for campers is summer weekends and holidays during July and August. The average campground occupancy rate for July weekends is 51.6% and 29.8% for August. Ninety percent of campers originate in Saskatchewan and four percent come from Manitoba.

Table 1: Number of Vehicles Entering

Year	1976	1979	1981	1983	1985
Vehicles Entering	10,822	9,978	11,640	13,362	13,821

Table 2: Number of Camper Days

Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Camper Days	3,353	3,925	6,674	5,541	6,435	6,778

Statistics are not available on the use of the beach, picnic area, playground, boat launch or other specific facilities within the Park.

Other studies have not been undertaken which would document the origin of the vehicles entering the site. Long term use patterns associated with cottaging, fishing and other related activities, however supports the view that most existing use originates from within the region.

3.4.1.1 Available Facilities

Development of the Recreation Site has been limited since the initial improvements in the mid 1960's when internal roads, boat launch and parking lots were constructed between the main valley road (now Highway 247) and the strip of mature trees along the lakeshore. Extensive tree planting was undertaken at that time as well. Fifty campsites have been developed, complete with tables, fireplaces, waste receptacles and parking. An overflow campground of 20 sites is also available.

Some improvements have been made to the beach by the addition of coarse sand and gravel and a bath change house has been located nearby. Toilet facilities, drinking water, and limited picnicking facilities are available between the shoreline and the internal access roads. The boat launch and trailer parking area at the extreme easterly end of the Park receive significant public use by boaters and anglers.

Facility development of the valley sides, coulees and upland areas has not yet taken place for any forms of recreation (hiking, cross-country skiing, camping, picnicking, etc.). These areas remain in their natural state and remain underutilized.

3.4.1.2 Recreation Use and Trends

Within the Qu'Appelle Valley, a detailed survey of use patterns was undertaken in 1979. It was determined that Qu'Appelle Basin residents account for eighty percent of recreation users in the valley; this is not expected to change much in the near future.

While population numbers are not expected to change significantly in the Crooked Lake region, the composition will change as more people reach retirement age and more people leave the smaller and rural communities in favour of larger centers, including Regina.

One obvious trend in North American society over the past two or three decades has been the increasing amount of leisure time. This trend is expected to continue as long as there are advances in technology and increases in disposable family income.

Changing public attitudes towards the importance of health and physical fitness have resulted in a shift from the traditional rest and relaxation forms of leisure to more active forms of recreation and sports (jogging, hiking, tennis, cross-country skiing, cycling, fitness classes).

For many years the most common outdoor leisure pursuit has been driving for pleasure. Associated with driving have been traditional activities such as walking, picnicking, fishing, and sight seeing. Energy shortages and rising fuel prices have restricted pleasure driving in the last decade, but more fuel efficient vehicles and trends toward more luxurious recreational vehicles and motor homes have acted as a counterbalance, increasing the pleasure of the trip. Accommodation within the vehicle has shifted some costs to the transportation mode. Many have chosen to pursue recreational interests closer to home.

Studies by Parks Canada have shown that not only are more people participating in most pursuits (incidence) they are participating more often in them (frequency). Winter sports particularly are showing great participation rates. Cottages are also being winterized and used more throughout the year.

Changes in lifestyle, aging of the population, the economy and other factors will tend to influence current trends in the Qu'Appelle Basin. Use of cottages is expected to increase throughout the year. The past rapid growth in family camping is expected to level off, however the number of camper-days is expected to increase steadily. Similarly, day use of Provincial Recreation Parks is expected to increase at a steady rate. Land oriented recreational activities are also expected to increase, especially the extensive forms such as cross-country skiing, hiking, and nature viewing. Water oriented activities are not expected to increase as rapidly in the Qu'Appelle Basin due to the poor water quality of the lakes in late summer.

The most important accommodation facilities in the Qu'Appelle Valley are cottages, staying with friends and camping, in that order. The majority of cottage owners at Crooked Lake are from the surrounding local area with Melville and Grenfell residents forming the largest segment.

Provincially significant recreation facilities such as the 18-hole golf course on the Cowessess Indian Reserve two miles south and the Ochapowace Ski Resort ten miles southeast can be expected to attract increasing numbers of visitors from outside the local market area. Some of these visitors may be attracted to the new Provincial Park for other day-use activities or camping.

Increases in visitation and use of Crooked Lake Provincial Park can also be expected to reflect improvements to existing facilities and services, particularly in those activities already enjoyed by the local market population. These include camping, picnicking, boating, fishing and beach activities, and, to a lesser extent, hiking, cross-country skiing, trail riding and nature appreciation.

Future potential use of the Park may be restricted by its location relatively distant (2 hours drive) from the major population center of Regina. It is also somewhat out of the way for out-of-province tourists on the Yellowhead and Trans Canada Highways whose objective it is to reach more distant planned destinations. While these two potential markets are sizeable, the greatest potential use and benefit of the Park is by and for the local and regional population.

3.4.1.3 Resource Use and Trends

Although there are six high capability natural sand beaches on Crooked Lake, they have been pre-empted for intensive public access and use by past development of cottage subdivisions. Backshore and upland resources behind these beaches are generally of lower recreational values. The Canada Land Inventory evaluation and mapping of Crooked Lake indicated that family camping and cottaging were the two most appropriate shoreline activities.

Recreation use of Crooked Lake appears to be limited by the deterioration of water quality in late summer. Although no specific recreation user perception studies have been undertaken, some evidence exists that cottagers and campers both believe water quality to be a factor affecting attractiveness and use of the lake. Other interviews indicated that users believed Crooked Lake to be below its capacity for recreational use and development.

The Qu'Appelle Valley Public Involvement Program indicated that a number of people in the eastern reaches of the valley were interested in wildlife habitat retention, natural environment conservation and accompanying extensive-type recreation

use. Many felt there was a need for additional public recreation facilities in this part of the valley.

The existing Park resources, although used for day use, camping, and water based activities such as swimming, boating and angling, can be improved upon. The uplands, for example, are mainly cultivated for agricultural use and the valley walls, including the treed coulees, remain relatively unused. As a new Provincial Park, the resources can be used more effectively for recreation.

3.4.2 Potential Benefits and Use

3.4.2.1 Resource Protection and Interpretation

Development of the Crooked Lake Provincial Recreation Park will ensure that a suitable portion of the Qu'appelle Valley and part of the Crooked Lake shoreline is protected for public use and enjoyment. Interpretive and extensive recreation facilities developed within the Park will complement those facilities established elsewhere throughout the Qu'Appelle Valley recreation corridor.

Proper, planned placement, development and maintenance of support facilities should protect the natural resource base and guard against misuse of sensitive areas such as the steep valley walls. Interpretation of the natural environment including the native flora and fauna, as well as historical, geological and archaeological features within the Park and elsewhere in the local area, can add to the visitors' appreciation and understanding of the Park. Scenic viewpoints, developed trails, markers and interpretive facilities can also supplement the recreational support facilities.

3.4.2.2 Outdoor Recreation Benefits

Much of the land within the Park could be actively used to provide opportunities for hiking, picnicking, camping, nature study, scenic appreciation and cross-country skiing. The accessibility to Crooked Lake ensures the only public recreation site on the lakeshore and provides direct access to the lake for sport fishing, boating, sailing, water skiing, swimming and other aquatic activites. Day use will continue to be most attractive to visitors from the region.

3.4.2.3 Tourism Benefits

The Park will become an important site for tourists who are passing through the region on Highway 247. The variety of outdoor recreational activities possible, as well as picnicking and overnight camping, combined with its scenic attractiveness could combine to make this Park a natural but temporary stopping point. Because of the lack of major tourist attractions, accommodation, food and other necessary services, the Park will not serve as a tourist destination area.

4. FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Crooked Lake Provincial Park is presently lacking in recreation development capable of sustaining extensive or intensive recreational activities or use. To become and maintain the prime focal point for public development and use on Crooked Lake, a number of improvements will be necessary.

Traditional use of the area and current trends and demands suggest the following improvements to campground and picnic ground facilities; a campground service center (showers/washrooms); a store/concession complex; an entry office; maintenance compound; playgrounds in both the day use and camping areas; development of cross-country, hiking and interpretive trails, complete with markers; viewpoint facilities; amphitheatre; sewage/refuse disposal systems; appropriate boundary fencing; beach and bathing area improvements through landfill (sand); and acquisition of additional uplands for better land use, control and dispersal of land based recreation activities. Special effort should be made to include some of the more significant archaeological sites on the upland within the Provincial Park. The Moose Bay Burial Mound and the Meso-Indian surface material site should be acquired and protected within the Park.

An immediate review and update of all previous development plans will be required to ensure that goals and objectives associated with the new "Recreation" Park classification are satisfied.

A park management strategy will also be a future requirement as none previously existed for the Recreation Site. Communications, promotion and signing will also have to be addressed, both within the Park and throughout the immediate market area. Interpretation of the geology, archaeology, and cultural heritage of the Crooked Lake area could be a very significant element of the new Park.

A number of private development opportunities may be identified during the plan review process, particularly where services such as the store/concesssion complex appear to be economically viable. Opportunities by private developers may only become apparent after public investment in infrastructure and other support services has been followed by increased use and enjoyment by park visitors.

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